

# Opponents tee off against golf expansion

Health board fears damage to aquifer

By Rob Keane  
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DUXBURY — With only weeks to go before town meeting, a project that's been talked about for years is suddenly facing some tough new opposition.

Last month, the health board released a letter saying it opposes plans to expand the North Hill Golf Course because it could damage the town's water supply. And another group trying to halt the project is said to be gaining strength and numbers. The group is questioning the financial viability and environmental safety of the plan.

Selectmen have pushed for expanding the golf course from nine to 18 holes, even though town meeting last year rejected moving forward on expansion plans. The project will

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come to the floor of town meeting again March 11, but any hopes of seeing expansion move quietly through town meeting have probably been dashed.

The board of health memo stated the expansion program is "not in keeping with the best interests of the town of Duxbury." In the memo, the board said the project could place the aquifer, the town's well water supply, in jeopardy.

"There is absolutely danger to the aquifer," said health board member Royston Stifler. "There is every room for error. Duxbury has the best aquifer in New England. We should protect it."

The health board's public position on golf course expansion has greatly pleased opponent Holly Morris. Morris, who jogs through the land that may be altered by nine new golf holes, said she's so concerned about the environmental impact that she joined an informal group of about 20 citizens who are fighting expansion.

"If the aquifer becomes contaminated (with pesticides), the value of the town is destroyed," she said. "The selectmen are looking at this whole project as a revenue source. I think there's real liability potential. Do we even have enough water for this?"

Morris is also concerned with the course's effect on local wildlife, despite government regulations protecting rare species.

"I'd like to think the government would protect the wildlife," she said. "But somebody has to bring it to their attention."

Other members of the informal organization, which has no

official name, question the financial feasibility of expanding the golf course.

"Bond rates have risen six times from a year ago," said Cap Kane, who was one of the more vocal opponents of the expansion plans at last year's town meeting. "You know and I know, you take the proposed price and add 50 percent to it; that's your base rate."

Kane said he is also concerned with the urgency the project seems to have gained.

"Last year, we voted down a study," he said. "Now, it's going straight to construction. I think they're rushing it."

Last year, voters rejected an article calling for a study of golf course expansion. Many voters opposed the course's estimated price and environmental impact. Since then, selectmen have presented a streamlined expansion plan with a \$1.8 million cost.

The goal of the new opposition organization is to inform the public about the adverse effects of expanding North Hill and, more importantly, to deal with the bottomline — namely, the town meeting vote.

"We have an effort to get people at town meeting," Morris said. "We want as many people there as we can to talk about our concerns with the golf course."

Morris said the group is "not ruling out" a letter-writing campaign or possibly a telemarketing campaign to attract voters.

Others say the group is growing daily.

"Holly's phone hasn't stopped ringing since we started," said Anne Eldridge, one of the group's organizers. "We're not an anti-group, but we're not going to quit fighting this golf

course."

But the new opposition is misdirected, according to selectman Friend Weiler, who calls it an "interesting phenomenon."

"If I thought we were damaging the water supply, I would be as far away from (proposing the article) as possible," he said. "I would try to shut down the existing nine holes."

"Unfortunately, proponents of the golf course expansion are labelled as someone who would damage the aquifer," he said.

Weiler also said he was "disappointed" with the board of health memo.